

St. Francis Historical Society

*****NEWSLETTER*****

4235 South Nicholson Avenue
St. Francis, Wisconsin 53207
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4th ANNUAL BUS TOUR TO OLD WORLD WISCONSIN

Call now to make your reservation to attend this outdoor museum of restored farmstead and village buildings. The original structures inhabited by Wisconsin's European immigrant settlers have been rebuilt on this outdoor site. Six dollars for members and eight dollars for non-members.

Persons holding reservations should meet at 8 a. m. at the St. Francis Community Center 3474 E. Howard avenue on Sunday September 25th. The first thirty five people signed up will be able to go. Call Kathy at 744-0873.

6th ANNUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS FAIR

Sign up now to reserve your table at this increasingly popular event. Here's a chance to sell those products of your talent. Another possibility is to come and browse and buy.

The fair this year will be held at the St. Francis Community Center on Sunday October 2nd from 12:00 to 4:30 p. m. Sellers table fee is ten dollars(10). Exhibitors only are not charged. Sandwiches and beverages will be available

Send you reservation with fee to:

Diane Johnston
4375 S. Nicholson Ave.
St. Francis, WI 53207

or call her at 483-5883 after 6 p. m. on weekdays or anytime on the week end. Call Kathy Schwingle on weekdays at 744-0873.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ODDS AND ENDS

We're happy to report that we won first place in booth decoration at St. Francis Days for the fourth year in a row Did you see your Society represented in the 4th of July parade riding on an old time fire engine? The cemetery committee hasn't been just lying around after an initial clean-up in spring, the cemetery has been mowed and cleaned up once each of the last three months Some of our members will be going to the state regional Historical Society meeting in Greenfield on September 17th St. Francis T-shirts and history book of St. Francis can be purchased by calling 744-0873 a homemade quilt is the grand prize of the raffle being conducted until November 2nd Save Monday November 28th open for our general membership meeting.

FROM THE EDITOR

I have enjoyed putting this newsletter together for the past three years. It has been a pleasure reporting about the many positive activities that have been sponsored by the Society. I hope that you have looked forward to receiving each issue in the mail. But it's time to let someone else have a crack at it and maybe bring a fresh format and perspective to what we've been doing.

Remember your suggestions and contributions for the newsletter are welcome. Just let me know. Terry Duffey

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am happy to report of our success in obtaining storage and display space at Thompson School. We will be moving our material into this area and working on several displays. I'm looking for someone interested in directing one of these displays, if interested call me. With this newly occupied space our efforts should now be directed towards the collection of artifacts and other historic materials, talk to your friends and neighbors and urge them to search their attic and basement for items we can use for our future displays. If anyone has items they have been holding for the Society I would like to see them brought to the next board meeting at Thompson school - October 5th. Anyone wishing to see our new facility and wish to attend the board meeting please feel free to do so, it starts at 7:30 p.m.

Special thanks to John Heidenreich and Bob Schwingle Jr. for chairing our St. Francis Days Ice Cream booth - we made money so it was a success. Thanks also to everyone who was able to work for us at St. Francis Days.

Welcome to the new members who have joined our Society since our spring letter:

Carl & Ellen Baehr
Nancy Bonzell
Skip & Linda Buechel
Ora Grace & Ray Broskowski
John & Monica Czarnecki
Marta Dahm
Arno Klausmeier
Ralph & Nancy Kolodzek
Chris Schaubel
Bill & Lu Steinert

We look forward to working with you and meeting you at our next meeting.

JOIN YOURSELF OR PASS THIS ON TO A FRIEND

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____

ANNUAL DUES

ADDRESS _____

Individual \$ 4.00

ZIP _____ PHONE _____

Family \$ 5.00

Sustaining \$ 15.00

Life \$100.00

Corporation \$100.00

I would like to be contacted about an active role in the activities of the Society. Check if yes _____

MAIL TO: Ron Tessmer
2036 E. Fernwood Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53207

OR

Bob Schwingle
3429 E. Van Beck Ave.
St. Francis, WI 53207

MEMORIES OF ST. FRANCIS

Thanks to Ralph Voltner Sr. for sharing his recollections in this issue with us.

Ralph's first home was at 105 Packard Avenue, Cudahy. Today that would be in the 4300 block of South Packard Avenue.

In the mid 1920's Ralph's family moved to a house on a site which is now occupied by St. Francis High School. This move was an opportunity to farm more acreage. Corn, oats, wheat, were grown in addition to a lot of truck farm products like lettuce and tomatoes.

A few year's after moving there, Ralph's father Joe reported seeing two wolves. Officials and neighbors scoffed at the idea. A few days later his father shot one near the front of his house. Even then people were skeptical. The issue was laid to rest, when the game warden named Dietrich officially identified it as a wolf. This incident was reported in the Milwaukee Sentinel on September 9, 1930.

Tokens were often uncovered on the grounds that said: "Good for 1 quart of milk". These were reminders of the dairy that was once run there by Jacob Bessie. The area was referred to as Bessie's Hill.

The hilly area required digging a well 280 feet deep. All the cranking was too much effort on a steady basis, so a gas engine was installed. If the engine failed, it was back to hand power, usually by three people at a time. Ralph believes that when the high school was built, the well was capped but not destroyed.

Another effort at modernization came with the purchase of a Fordson Tractor - one that had to be cranked up. The trouble was that it wouldn't start on cold mornings so horses would have to be hitched up anyway. Family members would come back later in the day when it had warmed up. Ralph's brother said that the only solution was to start it the night before and leave it running so that they could get an early start the next morning. For some reason they never actually did this.

The cows had to be taken out to pasture before going to school at St. Frederick's in Cudahy. The nun there said that it didn't matter how many patches were on childrens clothes, just as long as they were clean.

The cows had to be taken in to be milked after school and then back out and in again after supper. These duties plus homework didn't leave much time for traditional games like baseball with other children.

"Fun" was more likely to be in the form of playing in and around the creek that ran through the property. Ralph believes that the creek began near Allerton Avenue and Lake Drive in Cudahy and ran north through their property, stayed east of Packard avenue until Howard avenue, where it ran through a pipe under the road and turned east and emptied into the lake near the Electric Company Power Plant. The creek was usually a trickle to six inches deep and four to five feet wide unless swollen by rain.

Ralph says that he occasionally thinks back to his life on the farm. He is reluctant to call them "the good old days" but observes that today's children just do not have the opportunities to enjoy what were at one time common place experiences. To Ralph, sleeping on fresh hay in a barn was just as aromatic as being in a garden of roses.

Where does Ralph live today? Just a block west of Packard avenue, within view of the hill where he grew up.